

Site: M:26/24/2

Bessie Hill House

Built: 1902

602 Falls Road

Private

The construction of this vernacular frame dwelling typical of the black community marked the third generation of family building in this small, 19th century kinship area. This house was built by Bessie Hill on land obtained from her parents, Eliza and William Johnson, who lived next door. It remained in the Hill family until its sale in 1945 to Anne Bullard. It has recently been purchased by the Stevens family, who have lived here since 1947.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. M:26/24/2

Magi No. 1451695704

DOE ☐ yes ☐ noNR eligible ☐ yes ☒ no
contrib. element in H.D. ☐

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Bessie Hill Houseand/or common Stevens House

2. Location

street & number 602 Falls Road ☐ not for publicationcity, town Rockville ☐ vicinity of congressional district 8state Maryland county Montgomery (RV Planning Area 4)

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Mr. and Mrs. Warren Stevensstreet & number 602 Falls Road telephone no. 762-8524city, town Rockville state and zip code Maryland 20850

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. No Deed Recorded liberstreet & number foliocity, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Nonedate ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. M:26/24/2

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

Check one

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The subject house faces east, the second of three houses accessed from Falls Road to the west by a private lane along the north property lines. Visible from Falls Road, but buffered by the lot to the west, the structure is sited in the center of a small, (4,800 square feet) square lot. The house is surrounded by lawn ornamented with dogwood, shrubs, trees, flower beds and a small vegetable garden in the southwest corner, all immaculately maintained and enclosed by a painted picket fence on the east and north, privacy fencing on the south, and shrubs and wire fencing on the west. A small shed-roofed frame and fluted-German- siding outbuilding is in the south yard, built by the owner from salvaged materials from a shop building on Chestnut Lodge to serve as a tool shed and workshop. There is a crushed rock and gravel driveway east of the house.

The lot is part of a one-acre parcel purchased in 1845 by Ann Willson, a free black woman, which served as the nucleus for additional family holdings around it. The Bessie Hill house and lot was carved out of the one-acre for the daughter of a later owner/descendant. Another (recent) house is to the east, and a one-story frame dwelling ca. 1900 is to the rear and south of the one acre. Taken as a whole, the area still reflects the generational development of a family enclave. (See topographical map and site plans, attachments 7.2 and 7.3)

Built ca.1902 as an L-shaped two-bay by one-bay vernacular two-story rectangular frame 1/1 main block with a 1-1/2 story east (originally rear) wing, it is now roughly "T" shaped with two later additions: a one-story addition to the north and a narrow addition on the south part of the east wing. The cross-gable roof is composition shingled. The foundation is cement (perhaps parged fieldstone) under the original front and rear wing, and cement block under the north addition. There is no cellar, and metal grilles are fixed in the foundation for crawl space ventilation.

Wide (ca. 6") rough-sawed unbeveled siding is on the north, east, and south, and 5" beveled siding on the west, the side visible from Falls Road, all finished with cornerboards and a plain fascia. This "finished" side was undoubtedly the original front, further evidenced by infill siding under the first story south-bay window, indicative of an earlier door. A full-width porch traditionally would have completed the front. There is one brick corbelled interior chimney near the center of the main block roof on the rear slope.

Modestly built, this vernacular house has no ornamentation. Its verticality and small scale distinguish it from later Craftsman-influenced houses to the west on Falls Road and modern split

continued on attachment 8 page 1 (8.1)

Description (continued) : Bessie Hill House

levels and modern colonials to the east. Despite its post-1900 date, and modern 1/1 replacement windows in the main block, its vertical rectangular mass and use of traditional materials and form make it distinctively 19th century in character.

The two-bay east (original front) facade has an evenly spaced 1/1 modern replacement window in the north and south bays, first and second story.

The south facade is composed of the main block and a now-enclosed shed-roofed one-story porch infilling the L; this is divided into an entrance foyer and a bathroom. The main block has a 1/1 modern window centered on the second story, and one window offset to the east on the first story. The enclosed porch has a centered 6/6 window on the south, and a 12 light wood panel exterior door on the east.

The one-bay west (originally rear, now front) consists of the 1-1/2 story rear wing. The south facade has a 1/1 window in the gabled attic story and a 6/6 window on the first story. The north facade has one 6/6 window.

The north facade is formed from the main block and a side-gabled one-story addition. The one-bay main block has a 1/1 window on the second story. The addition has a 12 light wood panel exterior door in the east facade, accessed by flag stepping stones to a concrete pad, a pair of 6/6 windows on the north facade and a pair of 6/6 windows on the west side.

Interior

The interior has been modernized: the two first story mainblock rooms are combined into one large room with a connecting dining room in the north addition. The kitchen in the rear wing retains the original wainscotting and cupboards.

8. Significance

Survey No. M:26/24/2

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

☐ local history

☐ Black history

Specific dates 1902

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Significance

The construction of the Bessie Hill house in 1902 marked the third generation of family building in this small, 19th century black kinship community. This well-maintained house is a fine example of a once-common vernacular house type. It has been the home of the Stevens family for four decades.

ROCKVILLE HISTORIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN DATA:

1. Historic context theme(s): Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Community Planning
2. Geographic Organization: Piedmont, Montgomery County, City of Rockville
3. Chronological Period(s): Maturation and Expansion ; 1873–1931.
4. Resource type: single family residence

History and Support

In 1902 Elizza Ann (Davis) Johnson and her husband "Mr. Billy" Johnson deeded 10,027 square feet of land adjacent to their own house to their daughter Mrs. Vernon Hill, known as "Bessie". 1/ The Davis-Johnson family members had been building on these hillside acres bordering the road to Great Falls since Ann Willson Davis, a free black woman, received the land in 1845. 2/ William Johnson (1845–1924) purchased a quarter acre from Mrs. Willson in 1871 following his marriage to Elizza.

By the end of the 19th century the Johnsons had increased their holdings by additional land purchases and by purchase of the original lots from other Davis heirs. "Mr. Billy" was a handyman at the Farmers Bank in Rockville and as the primary landlord for the small community was remembered long after his death. 3/

continued on attachment 8 page 1 (8.1)

Statement of Significance/ History (continued) : Bessie Hill House

Bessie Hill constructed her house in 1902, partly financed by a \$250 mortgage to realtor Frank Higgins. It appears on the 1903 tax records at a value of \$250. 4/ This two story, clapboard-covered building was constructed on a shallow fieldstone foundation. It had two rooms up and down, a rear wing, and little ornament - a utilitarian "folk" house. It lacked indoor plumbing, running water, and central heating, typical of houses built for less wealthy black and white families.

After Elizza Johnson died in 1917, "Mr. Billy" moved to this house to live with his daughter and her family. He died seven years later. In 1945 Bessie Hill's heirs sold the house to Anne Bullard of the "Rose Hill" estate across Falls Road. 5/ Mrs. Bullard purchased the building to house the family of their cook. At the time of the Bullard purchase the house was deteriorated and little more than a shell. Mrs. Bullard dug a well for running water and added the one-bay, shed-roofed addition on the east side for a bathroom. Later, during the Stevens occupancy, a one-room addition with gable roof and paired 6/6 windows was added to the west side for a dining room.

Warren and Theresa Stevens have lived in the house since 1947. 6/ Mrs. Stevens was employed at "Rose Hill" for 19 years. Following her retirement in 1971, the Bullard arranged for the Stevens to purchase the house, and title passed to them in June, 1986. Despite the long Stevens residency, many long-time Rockville residents refer to this as the Bessie Hill House.

Footnotes:

1. Montgomery County Land Records, TD 24/16 (1902).
2. See MHT Inventory Form for 600 Falls Road (M:26/24/1). This form gives early history of this community and Ann Willson's property.
3. Johnson family information is taken from interviews and records of the Montgomery County Historical Society. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were buried at Haiti Cemetery.
4. Montgomery County Land Records TD 20/293 and Assessment Records (1898-1918). It may have replaced one of the five houses designated "col'd" on the 1865 Martenet and Bond Map of Montgomery County.
5. Interview with Anne Bullard (1987). Mrs. Bullard purchased the house and 4,800 square feet at Land Record 967/26 (1945).
6. Interview with Theresa Stevens, 1987.

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10. Geographical Data

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

A

The figure shows three empty coordinate grids. The first grid is labeled 'Zone' and has 2 vertical lines. The second grid is labeled 'Easting' and has 4 vertical lines. The third grid is labeled 'Northing' and has 4 vertical lines. Each grid is a simple rectangle with vertical lines inside, representing a coordinate system.

Zone Easting Northing

B

Three empty bar charts are shown, each with a horizontal axis and a vertical axis. The first chart is labeled 'Zone' and has 5 tick marks on the horizontal axis. The second chart is labeled 'Easting' and has 10 tick marks on the horizontal axis. The third chart is labeled 'Northing' and has 10 tick marks on the horizontal axis.

Zone Easting Northing

c

D

[illegible][illegible]

G

[illegible]

East side of Falls Rd.

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	J. Christensen	Arch.	description
Anne Cissel			

organization Peerless Rockville date March, 1987

street & number P.O. Box 4262 telephone 762-0096

city or town Rockville state Maryland 20850

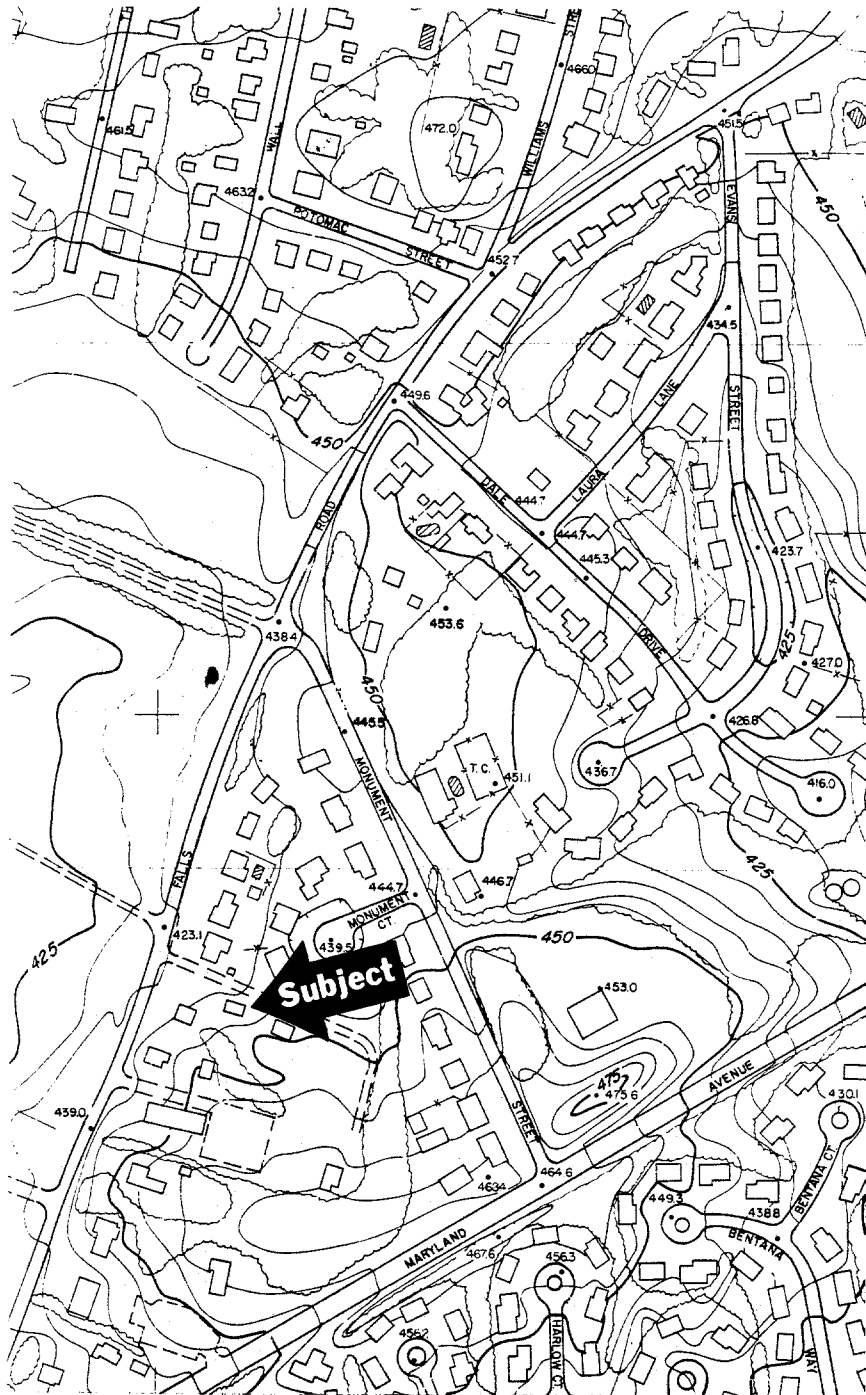
The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

PS-2746

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM

SURVEY NO. M:26/24/2
SECTION 7 PAGE 2

Description (continued) : Bessie Hill House
1978 City of Rockville topographical map, scale 1:200.



TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

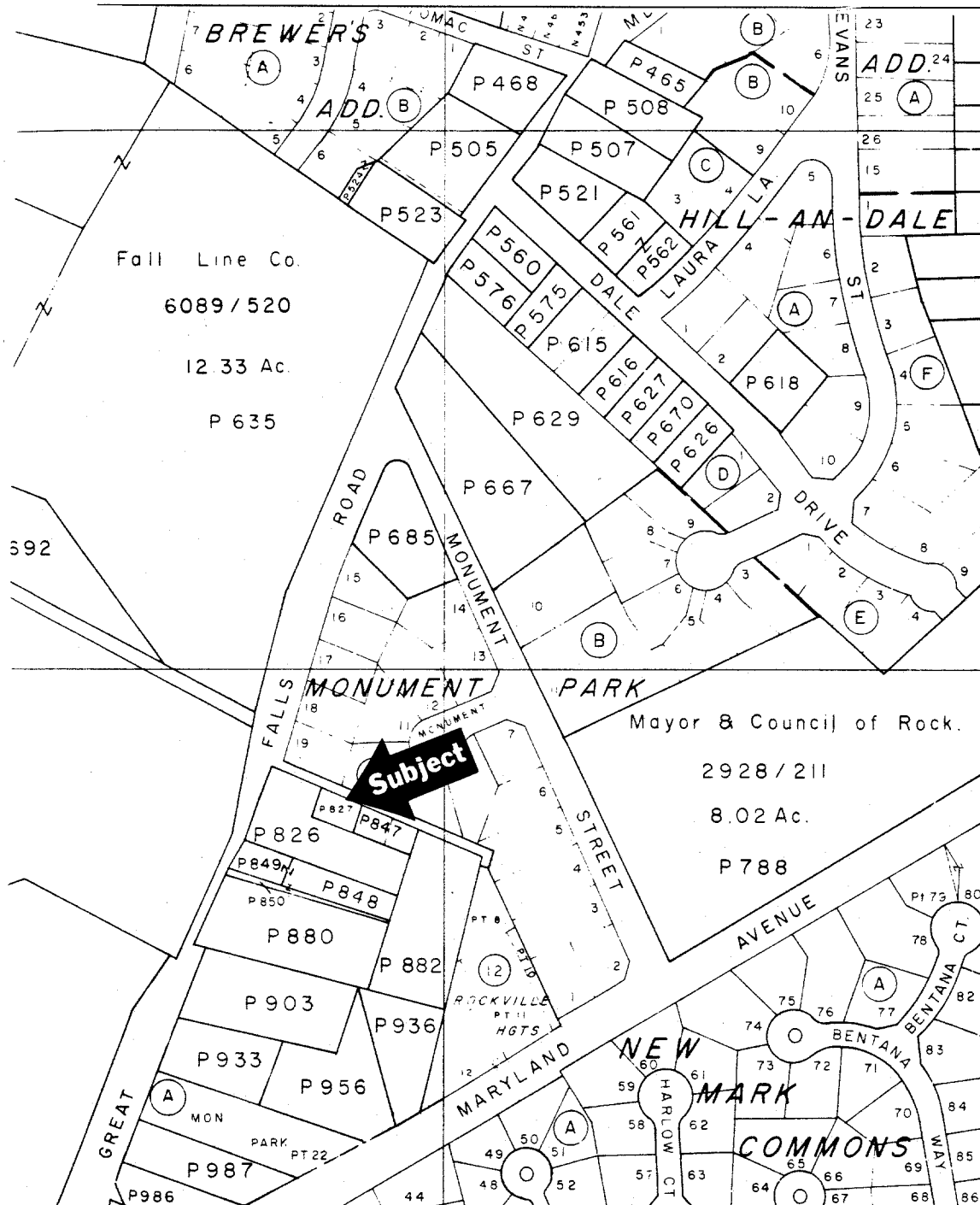
1" = 200'

NO.	REVISIONS	APFD	DATE
DATE	SCALE	DRAWING	FILE
JOB NO.		NO. D-2	
		OF 25	

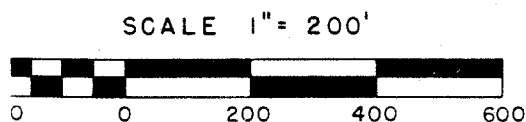
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM

SURVEY NO. M:26/24/2
SECTION 7 PAGE 3

Description (continued) : Bessie Hill House; subdivision of original one-acre site. Map: Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation, Montgomery County. scale 1:200, 1967



G 2



Map GR 122

W.S.S.C. 218 NW 8
Location: ROCKVILLE

1982

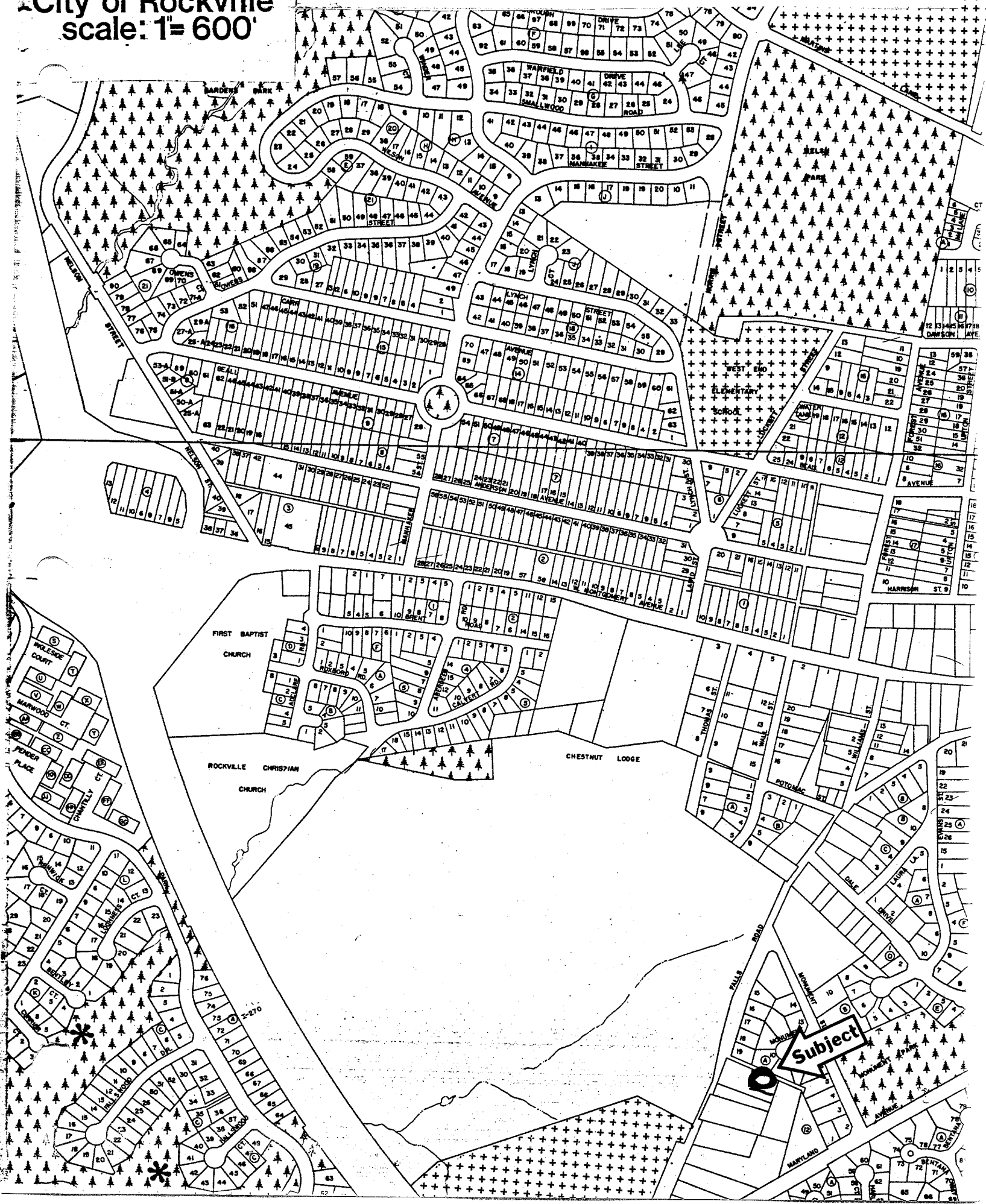
M:26/24/2

4

Bessie Hill House

602 Falls Road

City of Rockville
scale: 1" = 600'





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ROCKVILLE, MD 20851

M:26/24/2
Bessie Hill House
602 Falls Road
Rockville, Md. 20852
Dean Evangelista
date: 6/1987 elevation: SE

04870614



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1608 FARRAGUT AVE.
ROCKVILLE, MD 20851

M:26/24/2
Bessie Hill House
602 Falls Road
Rockville, Md. 20852
Dean Evangelista
date: 6/10/97 elevation: SW

04870617